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Annual Report, Hallows

Rowan Tree Church

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The ROWAN TREE *

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THE MYSTERY SCHOOL OF THE ROWAN TREE

Then you shall be taught to be wise,
So in the fullness of time you shall count yourselves
Among those who serve the Ancient Ones;

And you shall grow to love the music
Of the Woodlands,
To dance to the Sound of His Pipes,
In step with cloven hooves & the forest song....

And you shall learn the Mystery of Rebirth,
Filling your heart with Her moonlight,
Growing in harmony with the Earth,
As Her child, protective of your Mother....

And you shall grow in wisdom,
And you shall grow in compassion,
And in love shall you heal the sick,
Pursuing the arts of healing, the lore of the Mother's
Herbs.... Learning the psychic arts, to cure,
To nurture, to help Her children grow....

And in wisdom you shall give counsel,
Knowing the skills of divination, seeing how
The children best flow in Universal Harmony,
Understanding planetary cycles,
And knowing prophecy....

Thus, will you be of the Wise Ones....

(From the Charge of Lothloriën)

ANNUAL REPORT - HALLOWS 1983 - 1984ce

Hallows 1984ce

This year, there were thirteen of us gathered in a private home in South Minneapolis. At Hallows there were twelve Members of The Rowan Tree who all lived in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis: all twelve were present. There were six Members who lived in other parts of the United States, of whom one was able to be joined with us physically. It was a moving experience, to share ritual together, for we have shared a journey of many years and many miles to reach what we now have within The Mystery School. The roots of The Rowan Tree go back many years, indeed, many lives. (Jackie often comments that I have 'found' my old Book of Shadows from an earlier incarnation, and indeed, with the manner in which the inspiration flowed, it could well be so.)

We are the Members of The Rowan Tree. One of us has passed through the mysteries of Third Degree Initiation, and is called an Elder. To accept this Work is to make a lifelong commitment to one's Priest/esshood, and to care for the Members as a tribal Elder, there to give counsel, to admonish, and to know thoroughly that this is one's Path for many lives to come.

And we have another who has passed into the Mysteries of Second Degree Initiation. This is challenging work, for once past this Initiation, one begins Work as a Mentor, a Work that lasts until either death (if it truly stops then), or upon departure from the Membership. In order to achieve this standing, with credentials as a legal minister, and a High Priest/ess of Lothlorien one must be able to say "I have come many miles and this long journey brings me unblemished & willing, Before the altar. I have bathed myself in the tears of many days, A bath well-heated by the fires of my aspirations, A fire well-tended at every phase. I come, clean & strong, strengthened by the trials, Strengthened by the knowledge."

There were four Priestesses, those who have passed into the vows of the Initiate as a First Degree Wiccan. To achieve this goal is to have successfully completed the First and Second Ordeals, which outline the studies, skills, exercises, and requirements one must have in order to be deemed capable of accepting the power generated by the Ritual of First Degree Initiation. There were six Novices, those who have Dedicated themselves through ritual to the study of this Tradition of Wicca, "to the Lady of the Moon, who spills Her love into the night; to the Lord of the Sun, who shines in glory upon Her fields..." And there was our newest Member, who within only a week had come to join with us.

In addition, sharing through the spirit were the five other Members, two in Texas, one in Illinois, one in Missouri, and the fifth in Southern Minnesota. Four are Novices, and one a Novice Supplicant.

The past twelve months have seen some dramatic changes within our group. We have achieved a cohesiveness that requires careful consideration of any others, and careful thought by anyone considering joining with us. It is not a decision to be taken lightly. Many of us have already been together for a goodly handful of years, and now we anticipate what it will be like in ten, fifteen, thirty years. Since last year's Report, we have had little change. One of the 1983 Members has left, to better

pursue her work as a Priestess with her Dianic group. She is still much in contact with us, and shares our work on The Unicorn. We had four new Members come to join us. Three are still with us. This is our nature, now, as a working group of Wiccans: we are stable, and we love the work we share, the religious expression of our Tradition of Lothlorien, and the belief that we will continue working together for the coming many years. Granted, there are times it is rough. We are a family, and it is difficult coming together, but we are as close as blood, ready to defend our sisters and brothers, and eager to maintain contact. After all, it is required of us in "The Admonition," "Each of us has shown the ability to work together to raise good, positive energy. Each of us knows how to help & to share. Each of us must learn to trust each other."

And so we have. Now we share rituals together, grow and cry together, and share dreams and astral experiences. We are not growth oriented, in terms of numbers. We prefer that our growth be spiritually. We request that any who wishes to come and join with us take great care, and great time, for it ought be a lifetime's decision. Ask questions, make careful inquiries. Be certain that all questions are answered to your satisfaction. Only then should you request joining us.

The Roots of our Tree

We are incorporated in the State of Minnesota in order to prepare persons for the Ministry, in the manner of our religion, which is the Wiccan Path of Lothlorien. Our Incorporation was completed the 4th of February, 1980, and the Mystery School was established as the framework upon which would grow the leaves of the tree in 1981. All of this was to establish the teaching I found myself doing.

I was fortunate, for I began spiritual pursuits with childhood abilities, and a deeper journey through Eastern Metaphysics. I knew that my teachers were here, and throughout the years I studied from them, they repeated that they only trained teachers. I took their words to heart. I began teaching when I was called, and have yet to stop. I doubt that I could, and I know that not even death can stop this process. Nor should it.

The Unicorn

I set out, in 1977, to start a mail-order herb business. We still maintain our Herb Shop, of which the guardianship passes from Member to Member through the years. At present our Herbmistress is Jackie, and we keep in print a catalogue, and this winter are revising the price list (no small task). Out of that initial attempt came the Unicorn, which is now a regular newsletter, sent out eight times a year throughout the United States, and also to Canada, Australia, and parts of Europe. At times the position of Editor was passed on, but it returned to me, and having used wisely the time away from it, I now enjoy doing this work again. Regular features include an herb column, poetry, columns on divination, book reviews, and news of the Earth Religions communities. It also provides an outlet for the outstanding creative works of our Members, for we are a literary Tradition, with extensive pages in our Books of Shadows, and much original work in continual production, as is part of our training.

Our Childmistress

There are nine children as of Hallows '84. Six of them live locally, and three live at a distance. One of the positions we maintain is that of Childmistress, whose function it is to provide counsel if need be, and to be an additional role model for the Pagan parent. We see children as a glorious manifestation of the joy of life, and often have rituals which include them. It is not our wish to bring these young people up in our religion, but rather to give them a healthy attitude towards life, and to show them the joy of exploration. Thus, when they approach maturity, they will have the freedom to choose religious expression as each wishes. It was with joy that we filled this position at the Autumn Equinox with Mary M.

The Mystery School

Persons are admitted to the Mystery School, upon completing an application submitted to the College of Priests & Priestesses (a fancy phrase for all Second and Third Degree Initiates, who comprise the Mentors). If accepted, a Supplicant is then assigned to a Mentor. It is quite likely that by next year's Report, the College will show significant growth.

We require students who can make a twelve-month commitment to their studies, willing to be honest with themselves and with us at all times, and able to give a word and keep it. Local students must meet a minimum of once each Sabbat cycle with their Mentor, and out-of-town students maintain correspondence via cassette tape. In practise we maintain close relationships, and it is only during rare times that a Member functions at minimum level.

The Mentor is a source of advice, direction, and is responsible for evaluating the Novice. A Mentor is also a role model, and the completion of the Initiation requirements leading to this position include teaching publically and a demonstration of adeptness. Students are first taken through a ritual of Dedication by the Mentor, in which they dedicate themselves to growth in love of the Earth, in joy of the Universe, and thus to begin preparation for the first level of Initiation. The Novice collects those tools, written parts of our Tradition, and skills needed to become a Priest/ess. The amount of time this takes will vary from person to person, but an average time is one to two years.

Working Groups

As a collective group of people, all following the same pathworking and Tradition of Wicca, we have the opportunity to learn the manifestations of change, and to do so even when observed by peers. We are each unique, among us poets, musicians, dancers artists. We observe the celestial clock which encompasses the planet Earth, and celebrate ritually at Full Moons, at the beginnings of the Seasons, at the cross Holidays, and even at New Moons. There are many opportunities for working magick with others, and distance is no barrier for those with imagination. There is much to be said for working within a group situation. It brings a strong sense of ego-control, and expands one's abilities, for each is also required to practise individually.

We believe that to grow in enlightenment, one must understand the process of making positive changes within the self. We are trained to explore actions, emotions, and the stuff of which the soul is made.

4.

We must also examine the physical life we inhabit. The use of harmful substances is strongly discouraged, with over half of our Members completely in abstention from alcohol, recreational drugs, and the like, the the remainder of us using only moderately. The inability to control the uses of alcohol, drugs, nicotine, and the like will inhibit path-working.

The ability to grow into a happy, loving group is considered mandatory. The Admonition mandates that each of us learns to trust and to share with the others, for one of our goals lies within the energy we generate and focus as a group. Distance holds no barriers to group working, as we have learned, yet we take great pleasure in Members coming to visit, and each visit is like a great family reunion. This year past, we have had Members here from Illinois, New York, and Missouri, and are anticipating a visit from a Texas Member over the winter holidays. We have uncovered numerous past-life connections among ourselves, and we firmly know there will be lives shared again. Geography holds no challenge.

The Mysteries

We cherish the particular essence of the Tradition of Lothlorien. We are a Mystery Religion, and the nature of a Mystery Religion is that the wisdom & knowledge are gained only after learning the discipline of the art.

We reflect the need for self-discipline, and among us are those who are mastering martial arts, various musical instruments, creative disciplines, even weight-lifting. Skills at meditation must be gained, and regular meditation is necessary to pass through increasingly difficult levels of study.

Those of us who have studied through The Rowan Tree, even before it was given that name, have found that our study carries over into other pursuits in life. Many of us are involved in other forms of schooling. We have five Members in schools of healing. Three are in Paul's healing school and two are near completion of study at Northwest College of Chiropractic. Other Members are enrolled in undergraduate study at colleges and universities, and all of us are required to study in other paths. This path of study is only for those who can handle a challenge.

Our Library

Since last year's report, the library has undergone dramatic change. Fifteen months ago it began a major evolution. Money was taken from the general budget, and good shelving was constructed with donated labor. Since then, books have been purchased with regularity, and we have seen very generous donations from several of our Members. During the past fiscal year we have added nearly 150 volumes and we currently exchange publications with 37 other New Age groups.

The publication/periodical library has been reworked. D. Schaper is the caretaker of this overwhelming task, and it is now ready for use by all Members.

In the past fiscal year, the library was the beneficiary of 12% of our budget, and is generally where any surplus funds will be spent, as an investment in the wisdom of our future. As a non-profit religious organization, we must not show any profit.

Within our study we encounter various books as required reading. We are attempting to establish multiple copies of these required texts. We also maintain a large collection of all manner of relevant texts,

including things on natural dyes, cookbooks, fiction, languages, and works on various psychic skills.

Books are checked out by the Librarian, who keeps track of them in order to ensure a flow of books among all Members. It is projected that in the coming year, lists will be published in The Rowan Tree Newsletter to better inform the Members of the contents.

1983-84 Budget

Income

Pledge monies.....\$2039.
Herb shop sales..... 431.
Unicorn subscriptions. 318.
book/catalogue sales.. 35.
other..... 17.
total.....\$2850.

Expense

rent.....\$ 578.
printing/photocopy.... 536.
Postage/USPO..... 488.
Library purchases..... 340.
Herb Shop stock..... 262.
Office & misc..... 258.
Bank charges..... 147.
Phone costs (calls)... 140.
Equipment maintenance. 94.
Meteorite..... 30.
Sales tax (herb shop). 22.
total.....\$2895.

Beginning Balance

1983/84 fiscal year...\$ 143.
Income..... 2850.
total.....\$2993.
Expense..... 2895.
total.....\$ 98.
closing balance fiscal year.

It is with pleasure that I show a healthy fiscal year. This is due primarily to the stability of the pledge money received from Members, making up 72% of our total budget. Pledge money is a specified amount given on a monthly basis by each Member. The amount varies from a couple of dollars to the largess of two Members, who each donate thirty or more dollars. Without this generosity we could not have done so well. This is the first year (ever) in which financial matters have proceeded without stress !! (Blessed Be...)

We do not expect any dramatic changes in the forthcoming year. You will note that postage is a prime expense for us, and we anticipate an increase in that expense. There will be some expense incurred in the publishing of an updated price list for the Herb Shop, but we hope to offset that expense by increased subscriptions and herb shop sales as a direct result of the publication of The Master Book of Herbalism.

Some notes on expenses. Rent is paid as follows. \$25.00 monthly is paid to the person who keeps the physical property of the herb shop, and the same stipend is paid to cover the space for the library, files, and office materials that go with maintaining The Mystery School, The Unicorn, et al. Since we do not maintain a separate space rented solely by The Rowan Tree, this rent

is seen as maintaining an above/below work between the spiritual and the physical. It is likely that in some future year, The Rowan Tree will have adequate money to rent a temple/library/shop space of its own, but in the meantime, we are quite content with what we have, and find that using the private space of Members helps us in the essence of 'family' which we cherish.

The costs listed for printing needs clarification. The figure of \$536.00 includes \$340.00 for The Unicorn. The balance is for such things as forms for the Unicorn's layout, Rowan Tree stationary, and the like. Initially it also covered the printing of The Rowan Tree Newsletter, which is sent only to Members, but we have had substantial savings through the generosity of one of our Members, and it has truly been a joy.

Postage monies include \$170.00 for The Unicorn, and \$35.00 for the herb shop for out of town sales. The meteorite money came from donations of two Members (it was my idea to raise funds for the purchase, I was one of the two who donated...).

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The average pledge per Member was \$10.62 per month, but it must be noted that this is an inflated figure as it includes the two pledges which are very generous. If we were to examine the total costs, including an estimate for printing (were we not to receive this gift from the above mentioned Member), it would cost about ten dollars per month per Member to operate the various aspects of The Rowan Tree.

Looking Forward

It is anticipated that there will be greater inquiry from persons wishing to join the Mystery School. This will be due to increased exposure due to the publication of my Herbal. However, this past year we went through the framework of the pathworking, which we call The Ordeals, and made major revisions and changes. We have brought increased challenge, have clarified some aspects, and have created an even more-rounded education. The ultimate levels of Initiation lead to credentials as a legal minister, and beyond that, to a Doctor of Divinity Degree, and even though we are not accredited, we take our studies seriously. It takes, literally, many years to complete the studies through all three levels of initiation.

We are now in a position to closely examine any prospective Members. Not only will we examine their backgrounds, but it is important to see how well they will fit into The Rowan Tree as a whole. Not only must a prospective Member show a willingness to learn & a receptivity, but each must also bring skills and experience which can be shared. We are not growth oriented, in terms of increasing our numbers. We like what we have grown into, and prefer to keep small our numbers, and to focus instead on growing towards spiritual perfection. We will, this coming year, have room for a few new Members. One of the vacancies is already reserved for a returning Member. It is anticipated that at some future year, those wishing to join may well have to patiently await an opening, as is done in some Asian Mystery Schools. We cannot grow too large, for it is essential that each Member must be capable of knowing well, every other Member. This is inherent in the nature of a working group, in the maintenance of a peer group, and in keeping us as we are: family.

One recent change of interest to former Members who will read this report is that oral exams which are required to complete the Second, Third, and Fourth Ordeals will henceforth be conducted by all Initiates who have passed any given Ordeal.

We have added but one Initiate this past year, otherwise there have been no changes among this group. We have, instead, worked on internal changes, and have begun the construction of an astral temple for future Initiates. We expect that growth of the Priest/esshood will continue at a much slower pace than in past years, for we saw many of those who went quickly leave, as was part of our nature then. But now we are a tree, and we sink our roots into the Earth. The height we can achieve is directly related to the depth and surety of the roots. Well planted, we can spread far-reaching branches and bask in both sun- and moonlight.

Blessed Be

Paul V. Beyerl

Rev. Paul V. Beyerl, D.D.
Director